

COVID RESPONSE

PAPERMAN



IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

Keep going

Overview

Paperman's vision is of a world without trash. It was started in 2010 with an objective to accelerate recycling in India. Its interventions include public awareness programs, a digital on-demand recycling platform, managing processing units in partnership with various state governments, turnkey contracts for setting up recycling units, and other ancillary services for the industry.

Paperman Foundation works mainly in capacity building and awareness building around waste issues. PSPL is the for-profit social enterprise working on waste management solutions.

With the Covid lockdown, Paperman could not conduct many of its operations which involve on-ground training, activities, and events. Paperman used this time to reflect, document its work of 10 years, design new programmes and build new skills. The team regrouped to think of the way forward and scaling opportunities for the future. It grew the team, hiring about 10 people since the start of the pandemic.

It also provided ration to the rag picking community. It collaborated with other organisations and volunteers for the relief work. It took up ocean diving and cleaning activities in Andaman Islands.

Its for-profit arm, PSPL, received a boost with many smaller and purely profit minded enterprises shutting shop. Guided by its values, Paperman persevered.



For its suppliers, rag pickers and small-time aggregators, Paperman became the single source of revenue and business. Paperman managed to get government to deem waste collection as essential service.

Many suppliers who were working in the informal system, moved to Paperman's formal system of waste collection and business. While volumes during the lockdown were low, Paperman built trust with the suppliers that enabled it to double its volumes when lockdown eased.

The resilience of its suppliers helped Paperman build its own resilience too. On the demand side, Paperman was able to get better prices as many material recovery facilities closed during the lockdown.

LONG TERM SHIFTS

Renewed belief, new energy

One significant change as a result of the pandemic has been Paperman's approach to office work. Most work has moved to work-from-home (WFH) mode. The ability to function well in WFH mode has given it the confidence to grow its work. WFH also helps Paperman ensure the team's wellbeing and work-life balance with the team feeling reenergised.

The growth that came from persevering, working hard and keeping things open even if at significantly lower volumes initially during the pandemic has strengthened Paperman's belief in its work and mode of operation.



Conclusion

Paperman's values and mission helped it persevere in the initial days of the lockdown. This helped sustain many informal waste workers and generated trust for Paperman.

This has resulted in doubling its reach and increasing volumes and profits once things opened. It has laid a strong foundation of Paperman to grow and create significant impact in the future.

